

ON THE TRAIL OF THE LOST COLONY

Discoveries Which Suggest That "Croatan" Was Nags Head

By T. P. NASH, Jr.

Charlotte, N. C.

Have the shifting sands at Nags Head given up the long-buried secret of the fate of the Lost Colony? Have the winds swept bare a record written in grim tragedy more than three centuries ago? At least two persons are convinced that the answer to these questions is, positively yes. One of these is Dr. James D. Hathaway, of Elizabeth City, N. C., and the other is the writer of this article. Herein are set forth some of the circumstances, facts, and deductions which are the basis for that conviction.

Location of Nags Head.

Nags Head is the name given to a portion of the low-lying stretch of sand which forms a natural breakwater for the North Carolina mainland shore. Nags Head proper extends from Kill Devil Hill on the north to Oregon Inlet on the south. In width it varies from three quarters of a mile to two miles, and down its very middle runs a long chain of immense dunes. Not very many years ago these sand hills, like the greater part of the land, were thickly wooded.

However, the most significant facts for the purpose of this article in connection with Nags Head are the large fresh-water pond located just north of the last sand-hill, and the distance of Fort Raleigh on the northern end of Roanoke Island, home for a time of the White Colony, which lies just four miles across Albemarle Sound from this pond. These descriptive details are required for the purpose of location. It is necessary to state, in addition, that Nags Head is a jealously exclusive summer resort.

The northeast blast which blows steadily in winter beats against the northernmost Nags Head hill with uninterrupted violence. No obstruction stands between the ocean and the hill. As a result the immense dune is moving steadily from northeast to southwest, filling in as it goes the smaller ponds, once part of the big pond, which now lie between the hill and a less important chain of still wooded hills nearer the sound side.

Finding the Traces.

One day this past summer a party from the summer colony, returning from a day's fishing in the fresh pond discovered just at the northeastern base of the first hill a small plot of sand strewn with broken pieces of clay pottery, which they surmised to be of Indian make. The pieces had been swept bare of sand during the winter. A day or two later, a special party, of which I was a member, visited the Indian Kitchen, as it was termed for want of a better name. We were interested, in the beginning, simply in the Indian relics, and we collected many of the largest fragments of the pottery, arrow-heads, tomahawks, skinning-knives and pieces of flint. One member of the party found what seemed to be a crude stone pipe. All of us noticed small pieces of chinaware, or glazed white earthenware decorated with a blue design, lying about. The thought came to me at once that here might be a trace of the Lost Colony. The other members of the party only laughed at the suggestion, and I myself soon dismissed the thought as improbable. I was interested enough, however, to bring away several specimens of the chinaware, and I was later informed that a small piece of similar design had been found at Fort Raleigh and sent to the State Museum, though I haven't confirmed that information. As I considered the presence there of this china at the same level as the Indian pottery, and obviously left there at the same time, the first thought returned with more conviction, but I saw no way of verifying that conviction at the time.

Dr. Hathaway's Interest.

The matter would probably have rested here had not Dr. Hathaway learned of the discovery of the china mixed in with the Indian relics. He at once attached great importance to the probability that a trace of the Lost Colony had been revealed. He was at Nags Head at the time, and visited the place where the relics had been found. Several hundred yards to the south of the first place, and higher up the hill he discovered another "kitchen," from which he took a number of arrow-heads, but found no pieces of china. He brought back several pieces of the china from the first "kitchen" however.

During the summer many visitors from the resort carried away arrow-heads and other Indian specimens. But Dr. Hathaway set actively to work to collect all the data bearing on the discovery which had come to his attention.

Inquiry among the native bankers disclosed the information that several years ago, after an especially severe blow, a number of brass buttons with eyelets soldered on the backs were found. Most of these buttons have

been scattered and lost, but Dr. Hathaway has one in his possession which is decorated with a crown and wreath. At the same time, also, pieces of china were seen which could have been pieced together to make a plate or saucer, but these pieces were not taken. The bankers, though they watch these "kitchens" closely and search in them after hard blows, are interested only in the possibility and belief that they will find money. In this instance, the shift of wind swept the sand back again and covered the china many feet deep. Further investigation revealed evidences of a mighty forest conflagration at some long past time all along the eastern range of sand hills as far south as Jockey's Ridge. The present forest remains are indubitably a second or later growth, which was killed out by being sanded up and which is now decaying.

Other Evidence.

Late in the summer I made another trip to the first discovered "kitchen" and found a very small piece of china which was evidently from the bottom of a plate or saucer, as it had no design on it and was flat. On the reverse side it bore the concluding letters of a trade-mark or manufacturing name WOOD. The piece was broken short off at the beginning of the "W."

Only a few weeks ago Dr. Hathaway came into possession of by far the most important evidence of the presence of the Lost Colony at this place. He secured a rusty old knife, dagger, or short sword which had been taken from the sand at Nags Head, at the place where the Indian relics were found. The weapon resembles the old English dagger of the period of Edward IV, known as an anlace. The dagger is in the sheath, and the handle is gone. On the top there is a piece of copper which held the handle in place. Around the top of the guard there is a pewter ferule which was for the same purpose. The blade is about the width of four fingers and eighteen inches long. It is much rusted, but not to such a degree that the joining of the scabbard cannot be seen.

Later still, Dr. Hathaway writes me that he has secured an iron spear or harpoon, about four feet long, and an exact reproduction of an Indian arrow. The native boy who found it has had it in his possession about six years, and is himself but fifteen or sixteen years old. He couldn't tell where he found it exactly, but insisted it was way down below Jockey's Ridge. And so day by day evidence of the presence of white men with these Indians is being collected.

A Theory From the Facts.

How do these facts fit into an explanation of the fate of White's Lost Colony?

Turn, if you please, to the eighth page of Hill's "Young Peoples' History of North Carolina." You will find there a reproduction of one of John White's pictures. It is a wonderfully accurate map of Roanoke Island Nags Head, and the Albemarle section even as it is today, drawn by John White, the artist of Lane's colony, and the Governor of the Lost Colony. Observe "Trinity Harbor," and to the south, "Hatorach." The larger of the islands is now Nags Head. What was formerly "Trinity Harbor" has long been sanded in, however, and is now marked by one of the largest sand-hills on the coast, Kill Devil Hill. But the presence of an inlet there years ago as marked on the map, is well authenticated from other sources.

Now, to the southwest of "Trinity Harbor" observe further the bay or creek which makes into the island. The mouth of that creek has sanded in and is now the fresh-pond. You have to go no further back than the second generation of the people who inhabit Nags Head to discover that the fresh-pond did, in fact, at one time open into Albemarle Sound. Just beyond the extreme southern point of this creek as it appears on the map have been found the mingled relics of the Indians and whites.

How came these bits of china, with English trademarks, buttons, ancient English swords and iron harpoons at this place?

History states that the "lost colonists" went to Croatan, but no one has ever located that place. Some things, though, we do know about Croatan. In the first place it abounded in shell fish and commanded a view of the sea, for: "Sir Richard Grenville had promised to be back with supplies for Lane's colony before Easter, but Easter went by and the eyes of the settlers ached from vainly watching the sea. So scarce was the food that the small company had to be divided. Twenty went back to Croatan to live on shell fish and to watch for Grenville's coming. Ten others were sent to Hatteras for the same purpose. The rest took turns in going to the mainland for oysters, muscles and roots." Go back to the map. Doesn't that point at the south of the creek command an admirable view of the inlet for which the ships would head? Look closer. Isn't it a ship that has just come through "Trinity Harbor," headed for "Roanoke?"

What is now Croatan was in the colonists' time Secotan, and was back of Roanoke Island commanding no view of the sea.

Croatan could not have been far away, for Manteo and his tribe of Croatan Indians, who remained friendly to the English throughout,

were constantly advising and assisting the colonists. Whenever they are spoken of it is in immediate terms. Look at the map. The Indian village on Nags Head is just four miles from old Fort Raleigh.

Why did the lost colonists find it necessary to go to Croatan? The Indians who lived nearest the colonists, those led by Wingina and Wanchese, had become unfriendly even before the return of Lane's colony to England. If these were the nearest Indians, they must have lived on Roanoke Island itself, for an Indian village is indicated by White on this map; while it is stated that Governor Lane and twenty-five men rowed over to the village and shot down Wingina and his principal chiefs, thereby putting an end to the first gathering of the savages. But the savages bided their time. Still led by Wanchese they set upon the fifteen men left by Sir Richard Grenville to hold the country, and only the bones of these men were found by the colony under White. When White's colony had been settled for several months, the Governor was persuaded against his will to return to England for supplies. Conditions in that country delayed his return for three years. In that time what had happened to the colonists? Their hearts and eyes, too, were aching from vainly watching the sea. The Indians under Wanchese were threatening them. Manteo and the friendly Croatans offered protection, and an opportunity to watch for the return of the ships. The Croatans were tented in a pleasant woods, on the shores of fresh water—a goodly place. Did they go? The dinner service of civilized people has been found mingled with the clay pottery of the savage.

"It was not until August 15, 1590, that Governor White again reached Roanoke Island. How his heart must have throbbed with dread and hope as at daybreak on the 18th he landed at Roanoke Island. All the night before, his boatmen, with many a lusty call and with a trumpeter sounding English airs, had rowed along the shores, but no answer came from the dark forests. At some time in these long, long months, Wanchese had stirred up the tribes of the back country to join with his Indians in an attack on the English and their allies.

The forest conflagration, which can still be traced in the sands of the hill testifies to the struggle which took place, the slaughter of English and Croatans, the firing of the village which spread to the trees. It is a significant fact that Lawson, first historian of North Carolina, who makes a record of the coastal tribes of Indians early in 1700, has no mention of Croatan Indians.

Is not the conclusion almost inevitable that the Croatan of the colonists is Nags Head today; that the colonists went there and built homes with the Indians, on the side of the wooded hill, by the shore of fresh water; that there by the sea died the Lost Colony in a last brave stand against the red-skin hordes? Buried here in the sands may be the bones of the first white child born in America. Bones have indeed been found at this spot, but in so disintegrated a condition that they could not positively be identified as human. The sand-hill has moved completely over the villages, and the pond has filled in until its closest shore is a half mile to the north. New evidence is being found from time to time; and no one can predict what the winds may yet add to this story.

Valid Objections.

Many of the statements I have made are to be credited to Dr. Hathaway, who has interested himself actively in the investigation. He it was who informed me of finding the dagger and the harpoon, and called my attention to some of the historical matter bearing on the Lost Colony.

Several pertinent objections are to be brought against the conclusion which has been stated. The most serious of these is the historical statement that when Governor White found the colonists gone to Croatan he returned at once to his ships with the intention of going after them, but had to give up the attempt because he was on a dangerous coast at a very stormy season. The first map of North Carolina bears out this suggestion of a long journey, by locating "Croatan" about fifty miles below Hatteras.

Admittedly some of the most obvious steps towards determining the truth of the matter, as comparing the pieces of china with the specimens said to be in the State Museum and with patterns known to be of the period in question, as well as the more laborious problem of tracing out the clue held in the name found on one of the pieces have been neglected. But Dr. Hathaway may be persuaded to turn over his valuable collection to the State Historical Society and I shall be glad to add any specimens of value that I have, when a more thorough and expert investigation may be undertaken.

It appears further, that the destruction of the forest on Nags Head would have attracted the Governor's attention. But on White's return it seems certain that he came to Hatteras Inlet and sailed up the sound; and there is no indication of any kind that the trees on the sound side of the hills were ever burned.

Altogether there are so many discrepancies in the historical details that these objections are by no means conclusive.

Women and Friendship.

Women are much more practical than men, less slaves to emotion, less self-deluding. You do not see as often among them maudlin friendships, soft philanthropies, emotional political hero worship, as among men. A good many years ago there was printed a series of social caricatures with the line: "How these dear women do love each other, in which the artist made fun of the perfectly frank way in which women dispose of the artificial pretense of friendships among human beings. Undoubtedly women are quite as sincere in their friendships as men, but their good sense and their honesty with themselves will not permit them to be corrupted by expressing friendship except as a means of self-defense and in the presence of the dangerous friend. They understand that there are such things in the world as deep friendships and the deeper they are the scarcer they are. They are, in fact, scarce because they are deep, and deep because they are scarce. Every man knows this, but nearly every man puts the knowledge behind him and goes on luxuriously poisoning himself with an expression of his dear friendship for hundreds of men, which has no more validity than the tearful exchanges of affection that can be heard in front of any bar in the world about closing time. If he would estimate the real feeling of his acquaintances about him let him penetrate to his own real feeling about his acquaintances and, perhaps, learn to be careful not to stumble when he walks abroad. But he prefers to bury his complete indifference to hundreds of men, whether they live or die, under a plaster of affected benevolence and tenderness; and when the cherished friend takes a perfectly reasonable advantage of the proximity of friends to thrust him under the fifth rib, he bewails a betrayal of friendship.—F. P. Dunne in the November Metropolitan Magazine.

MUSCADINES.

By John Charles McNeill.
(Youth's Companion.)

Sometimes it's hard to wait and wait,
and watch the vines
Along the fences and across the
valley rangin',
And day by day, slower than snails,
the muscadines
From green to red, from red to
mellow purple changin'.
That's what you're bound to do,
though—Wait and wait,
And barely keep alive by thoughts
of what is comin'!
I'd like to help ol' Nature mend her
feeble gait,
And bring the merry grape-time
here a-hummin'.

Oh, the leaves must start to fallin',
The crow must change his callin',
And the meadow seed long grass to
hide the snipe.
Oh, the pines must groan some
hoarse,
The pigs must huddle closer,
Fore you know the muscadines are
hangin' ripe.

A lot of sunshine and a touch of frost
is all,
And then a few fair, quiet days to
set things straight in.
Up white oaks, hick'ries, gums—
wherever vines kin crawl—
I'll soon forgit the long and hun-
gry time of waitin'.
Them juicy, sugary clusters hangin'
to'rd the groun'—
It makes me smack my lips now,
only thinkin'
And when I've eat until another
won't go down,
Still twenty million through the
leaves a-winkin'!

Oh, the currants and the cherries,
The peaches and strawberries,
And the watermelon smilin' on the
vine!
Oh, the 'simmon beer and cider,
And the nut that fails to hide 'er—
They all give up their best to make
the muscadine!

MOON AND WATER.

(By Elizabeth McMurtrie Dinwiddie.)
The restless wind is sobbing to the
sky;
The restless waves are moaning to the
beach,
And I am restless, too, I know their
speech.
I know the longing in their plaintive
cry.
We're comrades all, the moon, the
tide and I.
We ever yearn for what we may not
reach.
But lo! there shines a comforter for
each—
The moon in tranquil beauty smiles
on high.

The heaving deep is burdened with
desire,
But o'er its dark there shines a path-
way bright.
Methinks 'tis where the angels late
have trod
And left their footprints all in silver
fire.
O hope of peace beyond! O radiant
light,
That leads across life's troubled sea
to God.
New York.